



(Musée Carnavalet)

PORTRAIT OF GEORGE SAND BY CHARPENTIER

# THE SEVEN STRINGS OF THE LYRE

*The Romantic Life of*

GEORGE SAND

1804-1876

BY

ELIZABETH W SCHERMERHORN

*Popular Edition*



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To  
HENRI AMIC

It may be that you, who lived close to her and perhaps saw her with other eyes, will find in this presentation of your beloved friend some things with which you are not in full sympathy I trust not, however, for it was you who revealed to me her soul when standing beside the desk where she used to work, your hands reverently touching her precious herbarium, you said to me, with deep emotion

"I have never known any one who was so good!"

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Une barque pleine d'amis qui chantent des airs délicieux vient à moi sur la fleuve rapide. Ils m'appellent, ils me tendent les bras. Viens donc, me disent-ils, que fais-tu sur cette triste rive? Viens chanter avec nous, viens boire dans nos coupes. Voici des fleurs, voici des instruments. Et ils me présentent une harpe d'une forme étrange. Mes doigts semblent y être habitués depuis longtemps; j'en tire des sons divins et ils m'écoutent avec attendrissement. Nous sautons à terre, nous nous élancons en courant et en chantant à travers les buissons embaumés. Mais alors tout disparaît et je m'éveille.

*Lettres d'un Voyageur,*



## FOREWORD

THE story of the life of George Sand is contained in her Memoirs, her letters, her novels and her prefaces. The frankest, sincerest and, at the same time, the least egotistical of women, she could not write a line without revealing herself. The selection and grouping of these revelations, the attempt to place them upon a clear and vivid background, is the humble office of the biographer.

Every opinion, sentiment and motive attributed to her in this volume is quoted or paraphrased from her own written words, or, at least inspired by them. In some instances, the testimony of her friends has been invoked. But as the book does not aim to be a chronicle a slight arrangement or foreshortening of events has occasionally been resorted to in order to fit the requirements of the frame selected. This, however, in no way affects any important sequence of the facts or emotions of her life.

And since the form of presentation has not permitted any external judgment or comment on this remarkable woman, the writer offers the following quotation from her friend and critic, Joseph Mazzini, as important to bear in mind before attempting to follow George Sand through the varied and agitated course of her life of seventy two years.

'There are (intelligences) whose understanding develops little by little and progressively, as in the evolution of Grecian architecture, so that the unity shines forth only in the mass. It is only by embracing the mass of its successive expressions, by running through every page in the life of the writer that we can seize and estimate it a fragment a detached portion, will never yield the secret.'

ELIZABETH W SCHERMERHORN

ROME, February 12, 1927



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*Line Drawings in the Text*

The drawings on pages 42, 65 164, 188 and 250 are from *Horace, Lélia, Un Hiver à Majorque Spiridion* and *Aldo le Rimeur* in the Complete Works of George Sand, of 1851-6 illustrated by Tony Johannot and Maurice Sand

The head on page 52 is after a drawing in the Musée Carnavalet formerly called George Sand, but recently questioned. That on page 143 is by Tony Johannot from *La Course à Chamounix*

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The drawing on page 52, representing George Sand as an Andalousian, is from the Notebook of Alfred de Musset.

The drawing of Gargilesse on page 262 is from an illustration in "George Sand et le Berry" by Mlle. L. Vincent. That of Nohant on page 285 is a pencil sketch by Maurice Sand, reproduced, as are all the portraits of Mme. Sand and her family, by permission of Mme. Aurore Lauth-Sand.

The vignettes on pages 22 and 74 appear in "Les Muses Romantiques," by Marcel Bouteron, ed. Goupy, 1926.

The sketch on page 302 is reproduced from the programme of the exercises at La Châtre in August, 1926, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of George Sand, and represents her statue in the park of La Châtre and a Berrichon "gars" with his *cornemuse*.

**THE SEVEN STRINGS  
OF THE LYRE**



# THE SEVEN STRINGS OF THE LYRE

## CHAPTER I

### RIPPING WATER

"*Un caractère indolent silencieux calme comme l'eau de cette source qui n'a pas un pli à sa surface, mais qu'un grain de sable bouleverse*"<sup>1</sup>

*Lettres d'un Voyageur*

IN the early part of the nineteenth century before Paris had yet entered upon the era of boulevards, department stores and tramways that has destroyed so many landmarks, there still stood in the Rue des Fossés Saint Victor a great, bare, ugly building pierced by a small arched gate to which a high flight of steps ascended. This was the Convent des Anglaises, founded during the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell by a Catholic order seeking a refuge in Paris from the persecutions of the English Protestants whom they had persecuted first. Having survived the storms of 1789, when it served as a prison for some of the great ladies whom it had educated, this ancient convent finally succumbed to the revolution of 1830, but at the time we are concerned with it still enjoyed among the best families of Paris a vogue quite equal that of the Sacré Cœur or the Abbaye aux Bois. All the nuns were English, Irish or Scotch, and, in passing through the cloisters and chapel, one trod on the worn funeral effigies, death's heads and mortuary epitaphs of pious and distinguished exiles from Protestant England whose bones were crumbling beneath, and portraits of English prelates and princes, among them that of the saintly

<sup>1</sup> An indolent silent nature calm as the water of this spring that has not a ripple on its surface but that is disturbed to its depths by a grain of sand —*Letters of a Traveller*

Mary Stuart, adorned the walls for the edification of those privileged persons who were admitted to the private parlour of the Lady Superior. Nevertheless, the young daughters of the *Petite Noblesse*, as well as young ladies from the best Catholic families of England, were sent there with the certainty of being carefully guarded and thoroughly instructed, and the masters brought in to form them in the accomplishments and graces indispensable to their correct fulfilment of the social obligations which life would lay upon them, were of the highest renown in their respective professions. In short, the relatives of a young person educated at the Convent des Anglaises might be reasonably sure that after a stay of two or three years she would return to them with a *cachet* of distinction and elegance which could not fail to bring her speedy and rich matrimonial rewards.

One day in the winter of 1817 a *fiacre* stopped before the little arched door of this amiable prison, and a tall blonde lady of middle age, with the bearing of a *grande-dame*, in spite of her sober and unfashionable dress, descended from it, leading by the hand a little girl of about fourteen, with large solemn black eyes, brown skin, and the sturdy, impassive bearing of a peasant child. The child wore a very new suit of purple serge, the uniform prescribed for the young ladies of the convent. The coachman carried a modest trunk up the steps and deposited it in the *portier's* room, and the grilled gates closed upon the two visitors.

Mme. Dupin de Francueil had taken the long three days journey by coach from her château in Berry, and had opened her apartment in the Rue Neuves des Mathurins, in order to place with appropriate ceremony her only granddaughter in this convent where she herself had twice resided, once as a *pensionnaire*, and once, less pleasantly, as a prisoner under the Terrorist Government. She was the widow of the wealthy and *dilettante* Dupin de Francueil, whose best claim to immortality was that he had been the lover of the *spirituelle* Mme. d'Epinay, celebrated as the patroness of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and as the friend of that newsmonger of Frederic the Great, the Baron Grimm. Being almost twice the age of his youthful, and second, wife, Francueil had succeeded in planting firmly in her

serious and malleable mind the principles and creed of the author of *Emile*, and the philosophical heresies of his irreligious contemporaries which were fashionable when he and Mme d'Epinay were young and venturesome. Mme Dupin, therefore, was a Deist, and as she never went to mass or encouraged the priestly profession in any but a social and neighbourly spirit, she had carefully restrained from burdening her grand daughter, Aurore Dupin, with useless and technical religious instruction beyond such easily effaced articles of faith as had been imparted by the parish priest in preparation for Aurore's first communion. It will be seen, however, that the well bred Mme Dupin knew when to bend to recognised social requirements and conventions. She had the aristocrat's repugnance for excess and sensationalism even in questions of conscience.

Moreover, her experiments with the educational theories of Jean Jacques had not been wholly satisfactory in their practical application, and Aurore had proved a tough morsel for the Rousseau system to digest. At an extremely early age she had manifested a stubbornness and impatience of control, together with distressing habits of reverie and absentmindedness which were fatal to the successful performance of tasks. The preceptor of *Emile* had neglected to provide a method for dealing with her alarming cataleptic periods when she would sit for hours, looking like a young idiot, her mouth open her hands hanging motionless at her side and her great eyes fixed, whether in philosophic contemplation or in mystic ecstasy, there was no means of determining. Mme Dupin felt that young companions might offer an antidote to these daydreams but the Château of Nohant was separated by several miles of bad roads from the social opportunities offered by the small town of La Châtre and Aurore's playmates were limited to peasant children from the rude old cottages that clustered outside the great iron gates of the château.

The educational precepts of *Emile* admitted no caste prejudices and, accordingly, she had been allowed to associate freely with the Berrichon peasants, driving the pigs with Plaisir the swineherd, raking hay, tending the sheep climbing trees for birds nests and listening to hobgoblin tales told in the soft Berrichon dialect by the old *chanvreur*, or flax comber.

of the village, when he made his annual rounds. Such elegant instruction in music, drawing, and literature, as Mme. Dupin had herself been able to offer as a supplement to the method of example and reasoning advocated in *Émile* was offset by the harsh and eccentric tutorial methods of an old gentleman in nankeen leggings, who played the flageolette, and had a passion for Latin. This bizarre person, a sort of Gallic Dr Johnson, was named Deschartres. He had been the tutor of Mme. Dupin's only son, now dead, and later became the steward of her estate. He united to his enthusiasm for the classics an equal zeal for the practice of medicine and surgery, and, as he entertained unorthodox views on the equality of the sexes, he was undeniably a dangerous guide for a very young person belonging to the upper classes. Mme. Dupin, beholding meditatively the work that she and Deschartres and Rousseau together had wrought, did not find it good, she anxiously took counsel of her natural brother, the genial and worldly Abbé de Beaumont, and of several elderly countesses, faded ghosts of the old *régime*, who, living in Paris, might be trusted to have kept up with the times, and decided, not without conscientious misgivings, to deliver over her *enfant terrible* to the discreet ministrations of the Sisters at the Convent des Anglaises.

"My child, you do not seem to have common sense," she said to Aurore when the moment came to break the news to her; "You have inherited an excellent intelligence from your father and grandparents, but you do all in your power to appear an idiot. You could be attractive, but you take pride in looking like a fright. Your complexion is tanned, your hands are rough, your feet are all out of shape in those *sabots* you insist on wearing. You have no bearing, no grace, no tact. Your brain is getting as deformed as your body. Sometimes you hardly answer when spoken to, and you put on the air of a bold creature who scorns her human companions. Sometimes you chatter like a silly magpie; you have a good heart but a bad head. We must change all this. Besides, you need instruction in the accomplishments befitting your social position."

Aurore listened in silence, a provoking habit of hers which baffled and annoyed her grandmother. Finally, she asked if



(M. & C. no. 11)

PASTEL OF GEORGE SAND AS A CHILD



she would see her mother in Paris " I suppose so," said Mme Dupin coldly She began to despair of ever making this dull child understand that her mother was a very vulgar and impossible person who besides being common and frivolous and ignorant was still persisting in a quite unmentionable career upon which she had started before Aurore's father, Maurice Dupin had made her his mistress, and had gallantly, all too gallantly, married her Only a few days before, believing that the time had come for perfect frankness about the dangers of this unfortunate inheritance, Mme Dupin had solemnly narrated to Aurore the shocking history of her mother's tarnished past things that one can say but once, and that leave a bad taste behind The child had listened stolidly kneeling like a little penitent at her grandmother's bedside with her cold little hands in Mme Dupin's hot ones, and when the sordid story was finished she had departed dumb and apparently unmoved to her own room where she had locked herself in and emerged some hours later more stubborn and sphinx like than ever and without one little screw loosened in her morbid passion for that lost soul, Sophie Delaborde Dupin

" Yes Mme Dupin said in response to her question, " you will see her and afterwards you will be separated from her as well as from me for the time necessary to complete your education Aurore was unperturbed by this awful fate ' That's all right' she said to herself " I don't know what a convent is like but at any rate it will be a change and I am tired of the life I live here, anyway "

Mme Dupin resolved to see to it that the child was not permitted to visit her mother on her holidays If she wishes to go out she may go to my stepson's family, the Villencuves of Chenonceaux, she thought But it was discovered later that Aurore did not care to go out

It was the hour of recess, when they arrived at the convent, and while Mme Dupin was proudly explaining to the Mother Superior (a stout placid lady, whose imposing worldliness was tempered by a shrewd understanding of human nature), the exceptional and enlightened educational *regime* she had adopted for her granddaughter Aurore was being escorted around the garden by one of the most dignified of the young

ladies, and was subjected to a critical examination from seventy pairs of eyes. Quite undaunted, she surveyed with interest the agricultural possibilities of the garden ; the culture of flowers, she afterwards learned, was delegated to the youngest children, and her open interest at once disqualified her for more advanced social connections. She joined with goodwill in a game of prisoner's base, and atoned for her ignorance of the rules by the agility of her legs. She was escorted back to the parlour of the Mother Superior just in time to hear that estimable lady puncture Mme Dupin's exposition of her grandchild's advanced intellectual grade, by declaring as a finality that not having yet received the sacrament of confirmation, she would have to enter the youngest class.

The painful moment of parting from her grandmother had come, and Mme Dupin was grieved at the lack of emotion she displayed, and departed with her handkerchief to her eyes. "My dear," said a kindly little old nun who stood near, what did you say to your grandmother that pained her so?" "I did not say anything at all!" answered Aurore in amazement. "That child will make either a devil or a saint," thought the Mother Superior. "At present she is sleeping water."

\* \* \* \* \*

Aurore Dupin had not entered the Convent des Anglaises alone. She had brought with her an intimate and constant companion, but he was of a subtle essence, and not apprehensible even to the keen perceptions of the Mother Superior. Although endowed with virtues and powers closely resembling those of the godlike heroes of the Iliad and Jerusalem Delivered, and of other romantic epics on which Aurore's literary taste had been nourished, this secret friend was like the angels, an ageless, sexless spirit, of vague physical attributes. He came and went unbidden ; whether she wandered in the fields or dreamed over her books or lay half asleep in her bed, alone or in company, Aurore carried him with her secretly everywhere. Even his name, Corambé, had been a mysterious evolution, supernaturally conceived, and, like his presence, unevoked by her consciousness. In the romantic setting of the convent, in its mysterious, labyrinthine corridors, on its staircases leading to walled-up doors or to empty ruined rooms

littered with crumbling fragments of Gothic carvings, in the vast quiet garden where chestnut trees threw deep shadows, and luxuriant jasmine and ivy curtained the high walls that shut out the noises of the busy world Corambé found an environment on which his mystic spirit thrived But in the naked, time stained ugliness of the class rooms and dormitories he pined and wilted Before the bareness of theological exegesis he fled precipitately The fate of infants who died in their sins and the nature of the place of exile where they languished was a subject on which Aurore's inner light failed her

Questioned by the good Mother Alippe, who presided over the class in religious instruction, as to her conception of the post mortem condition of unbaptised children Aurore confidently affirmed that they returned to the bosom of their heavenly father

' What are you thinking about that you answer so ? ' cried poor Mother Alippe ' You were not listening to me I ask you again where do the souls of dead infants go ? ' Aurore was speechless A compassionate little neighbour whispered ' In Limbo In Olympus ! ' exclaimed Aurore derisively, scenting a practical joke ' For shame ! ' cried the horrified Mother Alippe ' Are you jesting during catechism ? ' But being a pure and trusting soul she accepted Aurore's protestations of good faith only exacting that she should cross herself as an effective antidote to the spirit of levity Another scandal ! Aurore did not know how to make the sign of the cross correctly ! Her misinformed nurse at Nohant had taught her to begin at the right shoulder This enormity was unpardonable, even by the long suffering Mother Alippe

' Have you always made it like that ? '

' My God yes ! '

' You are swearing my child ! '

" I do not think so

' But where have you come from ? You are a pagan, a real pagan ! ' And Aurore in expiation of such an extraordinary upbringing was condemned to wear her nightcap to the class room

The young ladies at the Convent des Anglaises fell by pre-

destination into three natural divisions, before which the conventional divisions of social ranks were levelled for the time being. There were the *dévôtes*, the *sages* and the *diabes*. Aurore's deficiencies of heart and mind seemed to mark her for the ranks of the devils, where opened her only opportunity for distinction. She threw herself with such fervour into the evil practices of this band of lost souls that she soon rose to leadership. The most wicked deed hitherto conceivable to the limited imaginations of the devils had been the attempt to outwit the *portier* and get a brief but fascinating glimpse of the Rue des Fossés from the top of the steps. Under the inspiration of Aurore their sins assumed a romantic, almost *Corambic* guise, as they tiptoed at midnight through the mazes of dark cellars and attics, in search of a mythical VICTIM believed to have been walled up alive in the thick masonry of the convent. In these satanic escapades Aurore was exhilarated by the pleasurable consciousness of having attracted the pious interest of the most popular nun in the convent, Madame Alicia, whom the pupils called "the Pearl" The beautiful and graceful figure of Madame Alicia could not be disguised under the folds of her robe and coiffe, and the magnificence of her long black eyelashes and tenderness of her blue eyes that were wells of purity, offset a superabundance of nose and deficiencies of mouth and chin. Aurore meditated on these eyes in the watches of the night, and derived solid satisfaction from the sensation of being the object of the prayers and solicitude of this radiant being. Madame Alicia had well-nigh supplanted her unseen companion Corambé, for, like the Lady of Shalott, Aurore was already half-sick of shadows and her adolescent soul was groping for a material embodiment of her ideals. But this infidelity was averted by the sudden transformation of the fluid, but enduring Corambé into a mystic semblance of the divine Bridegroom to Whom Madame Alicia had pledged her heart.

Deserting the peripatetic devils, Aurore began to frequent the chapel at dusk on warm spring evenings when the fragrance of jasmine floated in from the garden through the open door of the cloister, and the lamps glowing under the Gothic arches of the Sanctuary and reflected in the stone pavement, half-

revealed the silent veiled forms of the nuns prostrated before the Holy of Holies An altarpiece representing St Augustine, the patron of the convent, receiving supernaturally the divine revelation under a fig tree, excited her interest in that great sinner After a youth of appalling *diableries*, he had been made over into a great saint, whom time had adorned with a halo and jewelled robes From St Augustine she was led to contemplation of the life and conversion of the apostle Paul, who, while engaged in the active persecution of saints had been smitten by a heavenly vision She was too deep in sin, a leader of the weak in ways of iniquity, a persecutor of the virtuous She was haunted by the words that St Augustine heard, *Tolle, Legere* and repeated to herself over and over, ‘ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ’

Her conversion was swift and intense and astonished the nuns and her young followers alike The girls said, ‘ Saint Aurore had been in love with the devil and had fallen in the holy water basin ’ Any conscientious scruples about deserting the heresies of her ancestors were dispelled under the influence of a sudden and violent friendship with a fanatical young convert, a sort of consumptive Scotch Jean d Arc who had heard supernatural voices when tending sheep on the upland moors of her father’s farm bidding her brave the displeasures of her Free Kirk parents and become the Bride of Heaven Aurore admired her simplicity of faith as much as her heroism and longed to be persecuted for righteousness sake too Like St Theresa, in whom also she became greatly interested, Aurore was consumed by internal flames of love and aspiration She neither slept nor ate She adopted several varieties of bodily chastisement and lived in a state of rapt ecstasy Moreover she became good and industrious

The nuns of the Convent des Anglaises were practical, unimaginative people They discouraged Aurore’s visions and ecstasies and frowned upon the frequency of her communions They were disposed to doubt the sincerity or at least the permanence of her conversion, and checked her determination to become a *religieuse* Nevertheless the summer passed in a state of perfect beatitude until the death and funeral of Mother Alippe shocked Aurore out of her dreamy meditations

among the roses and jasmine. It was her first realisation of physical suffering and corruption. The period of exaltation had passed, and an overwhelming depression succeeded to it. She began to be harassed by doubts of her own worthiness. "Many are called but few are chosen," that terrible text that has wrecked the mental equilibrium of so many tortured souls, now rose as a fearful barrier between Aurore and the rapture of frequent partaking of the Blessed Sacrament. She was pursued by dread of committing a sin between confession and communion. Fortunately she had a wise Jesuit confessor who had no idea of allowing his flock to become so absorbed in the contemplation of the next world as to forget the art of conducting themselves gracefully in this. Divining that the maladies of Mlle. Dupin's soul arose from an excessive persecution of the flesh, he exacted as a penance that she return to the games and companions suitable to her age and station. "Run in the garden with the others, my child. Jump rope, and play tag. When you have recovered your appetite and sleep, your brain will cease to be tormented by imaginary faults."

This was the worst penance that could have been devised for an overwrought young soul. "I have lost the taste for play," pleaded Aurore, "and the habit of gaiety, and my spirit is so flighty that if I do not watch myself constantly, I shall forget God and my salvation." "Not a bit of it," laughed the genial priest. "Now, however, you are making piety unpopular among your mates by the austerity of your practice. Render the faith you profess attractive by the charm of your manners and appearance. Remember that Jesus commanded his disciples to have clean hands and perfumed hair; perfume, therefore, your heart with graciousness and your spirit with gaiety."

Aurore was greatly impressed with the sweet reasonableness of this argument. At fifteen it is not difficult to recover one's tastes for games and social intercourse. She was amazed to find that amusements at first entered upon in a spirit of submission soon became a pleasure and then a passion. Anxieties about the wrath of God and the salvation of her soul no longer mingled with her religious exercises, and piety became a tranquil, gladsome thing, like those fair gardens of Fra Angelico,

where gentle nuns and monks and smiling angels gambol in innocent and affectionate intercourse. And even as the wise Jesuit had prophesied earthly rewards followed abundantly upon this reconstructed piety. Aurore, radiating practical Christianity, beheld all hearts at her feet, nuns, teachers big and little girls basking in the glow of the religion of little kindnesses. The *diablos* were subdued, the *dévotes* were stimulated to be better, and the *bêtes* took heart and made surprising strides along the path of knowledge and righteousness.

But happiness even virtuous happiness, is such a fragile flower! You clasp it and its bloom is shed. At this supreme moment of Faith Triumphant when Aurore, having successfully staged a camouflaged Molière play in honour of the Mother-Superior's birthday, was at the pinnacle of fame and popularity, Mme Dupin again entered upon the scene. Perhaps rumours of her granddaughter's religious enthusiasm had disturbed her. At all events, she announced that the hour had struck for Aurore to leave the convent and give her attention to the selection of a husband a rite rendered more pressing by her own rapidly failing health. This was a terrible anti-climax, and Aurore felt that the hand of the Lord had been laid upon her over heavily. To the grief of parting from the good nuns and the wise confessor and her many young admirers was added the apprehension of that mysterious person, so perpetually and variously contemplated by young lady *pensionnaires*—a husband. But her grandmother looked so ill and weary that she restrained from troubling her just then with the news of her decision to become a nun, and departed with her as meekly and unprotestingly as she had arrived.

\* \* \* \*

Aurore had been absent at the convent two and a half years when in the spring of 1820, she returned with her grandmother to Nohant. In honour of her return her room had been painted and repapered in lilac, and the bed was draped in fresh chintz. As she opened her window to the warm spring sun, a sense of youth, of freedom of an unknown new existence stretching before her, rushed in with the sweet breath of fresh, tender growing things. All was right with the,

world! And discarding her convent uniform for a livelier iris, she donned a fresh, bright frock, caught back her thick glossy curls with a becoming wide ribbon bow, and descended to the garden which was like an immense bouquet, offering its fragrance and colour in homage to her youth and goodness. For, in contrast to the little girl who had once played in that garden, she was very, very good.

All sorts of tender associations were awakened as she walked down the long shady path to the bottom of the garden. Here was the lilac thicket where she and her mother had once built a little bower of bright stones and mosses gathered along the beautiful banks of the Indre not far away, with miniature caves and grottos and parterres, which her grandmother had thought silly; and here was the bench where she used to meditate tearfully on the sad refrain the children sang in their games:

*Nous n'irons plus aux bois,  
Les lauriers sont coupés.*

Here was the tree where that big teasing boy, Hippolyte Chatiron who, in some remarkable way, had turned out to be her brother, used to hang her doll upside down. There was the pear tree beneath which her little blind baby brother was buried, and down at the turn of the road to La Châtre was the great poplar tree where her father had been killed by a fall from his horse, a tragedy she could just remember, associated with black clothes and ghost stories whispered by the servants. Her old friends, the peasants, came to greet her in their wooden sabots and long blue smocks, and their quaint Berrichon speech was music to her ears. The old dogs wagged their tails and wriggled at her feet, and everybody, from her former playmates, Solange and Marie, to crusty old Deschartres, called her Mademoiselle. The homecoming was a great success. The anguish of the parting from the Convent des Anglaises rolled off like clouds after a thunderstorm. She forgot that she wanted to be a nun, or that anyone wanted her to choose a husband.

From the gravelled terrace a low flight of stone steps led to the glass doors of the white-panelled dining room, with the salon on one side and her grandmother's bedroom and boudoir

on the other, dark, heavily curtained rooms, with Louis XVI furniture and many family portraits. Her grandparents had been inordinate readers, and the best minds of the eighteenth century were stowed away in dull calf bindings behind the wooden panels of the bookcases—the kind of minds the nuns would certainly have thought it not wise for a young girl to investigate. But Mme Dupin put no restrictions on her granddaughter's reading, Voltaire, alone, being under the ban until she should be thirty. And had not the Jesuit confessor said that the soul filled with divine love need be afraid of nothing? Aurore stretched forth her hand confidently, eagerly. It rested on the works of Chateaubriand *René Le Génie du Christianisme*. Next to *René* stood *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

From the dim old walls the portraits of her forbears watched her sardonically. Her grandfather, Dupin de Francueil in a grey coat with diamond buttons, his hair turned up with a lady-like comb, seated before an easel, palette in hand, looked at her quizzically over his shoulder. The sharp, beady eyes of his old mistress, Mme d'Epinay gleamed at her a little spitefully from beneath a broad, white, intelligent brow. Opposite in Latour's best manner, Aurore's great grandfather the brave and gallant Count Maurice de Saxe, illegitimate son of the Elector of Poland florid, powdered, the blue sash of the Saint Esprit and the white scarf of a Marshal of France across his breast, stared at her with bold, merry blue eyes. And his mother, the notoriously beautiful Aurore de Koenigsmark, with flaming cheeks and coal black hair, her filmy drapery slipping back to display her round, white breasts half parted her bright coral lips in a sensual smile. Other faces gleamed in the dusk—Maurice Dupin, her father, handsome, dreamy, poetical, very boyish in his blue uniform; her step uncle the Archbishop of Arles bastard son of old Francueil, Mlle de Verrières the beautiful young lady who belonged to an opera troop and who had born to Marshal Saxe, without benefit of the clergy that second Aurore, now Mme Dupin, and the fair haired Hippolyte Chatiron, more peasant than Dupin but of whom her father had said to his wife he is mine as Caroline is yours. Aurore had learned from her grandmother's lips on that dreadful night more than two years ago, how

Caroline, with her turned-up nose and neat blond tresses had happened to be Sophie Delaborde's child !

And while they crowded about her, these bold, ardent, sensual, painted faces the pale, earnest young creature in whose veins their hot blood was beating, sat reading eagerly, uninterruptedly, hour after hour, and far into the long, still, lonely nights. The old walls of the Château de Nohant melted away, and Aurore was wandering in the primeval forests of America, by the shores of blue Alpine lakes under the starry sky. Corambé forsook his priestlike tasks to bear her company, and became a naked outcast, a pariah, the victim of man's inhumanity to man, cursing whatever gods there be, and battering his unconquerable soul against the tyranny of a society calling itself Law. How far these two companions had strayed from Fra Angelico's garden of peace and love ! Conscience-stricken, Aurore sought for her precious copy of the Imitation of Christ, inscribed with her name by the long, cold, white hand of Madame Alicia ; but laid it aside, for she saw it was full of unsuspected sophisms and naive lapses of logic. On reflection, she decided it was the book of the cloister *par excellence*, the code of the tonsured, and returned to Chateaubriand.

Alas, for the good Jesuit confessor's sublime trust ! Following the star of TOLLE, LEGERE, Aurore pursued her voyage of discovery through her grandmother's bookshelves Leibnitz, Pascal, Locke, Montaigne with certain passages marked "omit" ; then Hamlet, Byron, Werther. Stirred to the depths of her romantic little heart, she longed to be a creature consumed by nameless sorrows, and overwhelmed by immeasurable remorse , to have committed a crime which would make her feel the bitterness of despair. Then Scott calmed her emotion and she decided she would prefer to be a brave mountaineer, and live a life of adventure. Thus, during the months that followed, in the quiet house where Mme. Dupin was slowly dying, the little granddaughter whom she must soon leave to fight alone against the demons of her inheritance, was storing up in her wonderfully receptive mind the whole literature of romanticism and of mysticism. The leaven of the mass was the godlike Rousseau, the man of sorrow and of sentiment.

And the Spirit of Revealed Religion prepared to fold its tents and depart

\* \* \* \* \*

Before Mme Dupin had a chance to secure a suitable husband for the heiress of Nohant, she suffered a stroke of apoplexy. For ten months she lingered, clouded in mind and feeble in body. Meanwhile the pillars of the social life of La Châtre the nearest settlement to Nohant, rarely lacked for spicy and enlivening topics of domestic and neighbourly comment. Aurore, left free to express herself according to her own lights exhibited a marvellous fertility in the art of scandalising public opinion by her frank unconventionality and the independence of her opinions. The good dames of La Châtre gathered their offspring under their wings and flew to shelter behind their garden hedges when she came galloping down the road astride her pony, in breeches, smock and gaiters with two big dogs beside her and her little groom André, at her heels, clinging desperately to his mount and bearing her brace of pistols. When she had disappeared in a cloud of dust the matrons emerged from their hiding places and warned their young sons to keep out of her way.

The young sons however, manifested a disturbing masculine inclination to tolerance towards this extraordinary girl. Charles Duvernet and Alphonse Fleury had played with Aurore when they were in petticoats, and considered it only neighbourly to recall it. Jules Néraud, an ardent botanist, was agitated and flattered to have caught her red handed in the theft of a new species of dahlia which had nodded to her over the top of his garden wall as she cantered by. In short, the male youth of La Châtre privately agreed that Aurore Dupin had fine eyes, a good seat in her saddle, and could shake hands with the lads without blushing and behaving like an amorous turkey hen as the other girls did.

But no masculine condoning of the eccentricities of a handsome young woman ever improved her standing with his mothers and sisters. A goodly amount of legendary matter grew up about the character and personality of the future châtelaine of Nohant. She was said to take snuff smoke, and read heretical books all night by the bedside of her dying

grandmother. These charges were well substantiated. The gossips went further, however. She had been seen to carry the sacred Host away from the altar rail in her hindquarters, and had once entered the church on horseback. She was devoted to occult studies, and had been seen at midnight digging up bodies in the cemetery in order to dissect them, under the direction of the ghoulish Deschartres. She danced the *bouree* with the peasants at village fêtes ; she received young gentlemen in her room, and gave them rendezvous in the fields when she was hunting. Some of these stories reached the ears of the simple old curé of La Châtre. He had often enjoyed the good cheer of Mme Dupin's table and fireside, notwithstanding her unorthodox views, and now that the poor lady was helpless he felt a special obligation to protect her harum-scarum granddaughter, who was left to the guidance of that amazing old boor, Deschartres. The well-intentioned curé, therefore, took advantage of the confessional to put a few leading questions to Aurore in regard to a certain young medical student, whose name had been linked with hers in an unseemly manner. Aurore was indignant. Her confessor at the convent had declared it bad form to ask questions at confession, outside of the formula. She considered the good cure's probings not only indiscreet and indecent, but entirely irrelevant. Such matters had nothing to do with religion. She rose from her knees without answering the implied charge and left the church, never to return to it. But her abandonment of the forms of religion in no way affected the fervour of her belief in the Immanence of Divine Love, as explained by Leibnitz and interpreted by Jean Jacques. On the contrary, it was strengthened by the consciousness of her superior illumination. Moreover, interesting new horizons had been opened by her study of anatomy and physiology under the enthusiastic guidance of Deschartres. To the old tutor's zeal was added the tender encouragement of the medical student, already referred to, Stéphane de Grandsaigne, who was spending his vacation on the neighbouring estate of his parents. Aurore was persuaded that a knowledge of osteology would enable her to be useful to the peasants of the hamlet, who had bones to be set, cuts to be sewn up, and broken heads to be mended. She

astonished Grandsaigne by her stoicism over a dissection, and won his admiration by her enthusiasm for the legs and arms he brought her instead of the conventional books and nosegays He loaned her the entire skeleton of a little girl, and although it disturbed her for several nights by emerging from the bureau drawer where she kept it and drawing her bed curtains apart, Aurore succeeded in conquering these morbid fancies and subduing the waggish bones so that they consented to stay in the drawer all winter

Since her conversations with Stéphane were always purely pedagogic, she felt fully justified in her resentment of the curé's suspicions Stéphane was a serious, rather heavy youth, with a long, square jaw, and, moreover, he showed symptoms of consumption It could not for a moment be supposed that he could aspire to compete with any of the desirable pretendants who had been considered before Mme Dupin's illness for his parents though noble, had found the education of ten children (some of whom had stained the scutcheon by serious misdemeanours) ruinous to their finances, and were known to be in reduced circumstances In order to discourage any possibility of a sentimental episode however, Aurore had given Stéphane many assurances based on passages from Werther and Byron, of the dead and unresponsive state of her affections, and had talked depressingly about her strong inclination for the life of a religious celibate In the course of the argument by which Stéphane attempted to dissuade her from such a mournful fate, Aurore was shocked to discover that he had outstripped her on the road to radicalism, for while she had stopped short at scepticism, he had reached the point of negation, and boldly denied, not human virtue merely, but the actual existence of God When he returned to his studies in Paris they corresponded, and she endeavoured to bring him to a less desperate view of the universe One day she received a fervent letter beginning 'Truly philosophic soul you are right but you are the truth that kills !'—an allusion to the soundness of her arguments in favour of the convent Aurore was astonished She showed the letter to Deschartres, and he was astonished too He was not an expert in the affairs of the heart but it was his opinion that the letter

was a declaration of love. On second reading they agreed that it might be regarded as merely an assent to her opinions. She decided to give Stéphane the benefit of the doubt and replied with a discreet suggestion that he abandon speculative philosophy and devote himself exclusively to scientific research. The epistolary friendship cooled after that, and it was some time before they succeeded in placing their friendship on a satisfactory basis.

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At daybreak on Christmas morning, 1821, the bells of the little church just outside the château gates changed their joyous peals for the feast of Nativity into mournful tolling for the departure of a pure soul. Mme Dupin's last words to the granddaughter who had nursed her devotedly were " You have lost your best friend " All her property (which had dwindled considerably since the death of Francueil) was left to Aurore, save a pension to her undesirable daughter-in-law, Sophie, and a legacy to Hippolyte Chatiron, fruit of a youthful indiscretion of Maurice Dupin's. In order to prevent any interference from the Delabordes, Mme Dupin had selected with Aurore's approval René Villeneuve, her step-grandson, as guardian, and there had already been some negotiations for a marriage between Aurore and his son, Léonce.

René de Villeneuve, who had inherited the beautiful old château of Chenonceaux from his mother, was a distinguished gentleman with the exquisite deportment of the *grand monde* which he frequented, and Aurore, who had excited the La Châtre gossips by riding horseback with him when he visited Nohant, liked him very much. She had discovered that he read some of her favourite authors, and that his conversation was like a choice page from the book you admire most. He had encouraged her to believe that she had literary gifts herself, and this, together with the alluring pictures he had painted of life at Chenonceaux, made her future as Villeneuve's ward rather attractive. Aurore always liked new adventures and fresh themes for reverie. The idea of marriage to Léonce, however, whom she vaguely remembered in Paris, left her cold, and when René, arriving at Nohant for the reading of the will, threw out one or two hints as to desirable modifica-

tions of some of her habits and tastes as concessions to the prejudices of his wife (who was a Guibert), Aurore foresaw possible complications. The arrival of Sophie and a Delaborde reinforcement cooled her enthusiasm for the Villeneuve ideals still more. In spite of everything Sophie was deliciously chic and piquant, and could be very affectionate if she chose. Moreover, M<sup>e</sup> de Villeneuve's icily polite manner toward this lady with a past offended Aurore's warm loyalty for all her own people. Sophie's vulgarity at the reading of the will, when she noisily protested against the removal of her daughter (for whom she displayed a sudden and unforeseen attachment) from the natural protection of a lawful mother, caused another revulsion of feeling. Certain crude expressions prejudicial to the character of M<sup>e</sup> Dupin shocked Aurore's tender devotion to the memory of the departed, and suggested to her that the form and speech of the Paris boulevards might be even less congenial than the social prejudices of the fastidious M<sup>e</sup> de Villeneuve. Her mother shone less dazzlingly than on her arrival and the memory of M<sup>e</sup> Dupin's quiet, refined dignity, and pale intellectual face, acquired a new sanctity.

The Villeneuves would have won the day but for an unfortunate slip by which René betrayed the cloven hoof of "snobbery," for which the pupil of Jean Jacques was ever on the watch. The complete elimination of Sophie Delaborde, it appeared, was the natural corollary of residence at Chenonceaux and of alliance with L<sup>e</sup>once. The pure blood of the people asserted itself at that moment and Aurore hotly proclaimed herself for the progeny of the humble old grandfather who sold birds on the Quai des Oiseaux and turned her back for ever on the effete social standards of a dilapidated *bon ton*.

The triumphant Sophie bore off her prize without delay to M<sup>e</sup> Dupin's long closed Paris apartment, as a fitting scene for the matrimonial campaign. She left the broken hearted old Deschartres to superintend the affairs at Nohant and exhibited her ingratitude for her daughter's noble sacrifice by harshly separating her from her Berrichon maid her pet dog and pony, and (cruellest blow of all) from her precious books. Sophie's prejudices against "learning" were as deep rooted as the

Villeneuves' "snobbery." Each class, it seems, has its own inherent limitations.

The haughty Villeneuves washed their hands of their kinswoman after this. Neither Mme. René de Villeneuve nor Mme. Auguste de Villeneuve (who was a de Ségur) could be expected to accept her or to assist in the task of finding her a husband, after she had been seen publicly in Paris in company with the tarnished Sophie, the obscure Delaborde tribe, or that absurd, shabby M. Pierret, a bank clerk with St. Vitus' dance, and noisy Republican principles, who had been a faithful admirer and factotum of Sophie and of Maurice Dupin, too, since the days of Aurore's infancy. Such impossible companionship had compromised her for ever with the mothers of any honourable family. In a final interview, Aurore, notwithstanding an inward revolt against the *régime* of Sophie, stoutly asserted her determination to resent all insults to her mother and to see her as often as she pleased. "Your ideas are no doubt correct from a religious point of view," was her cousin's response to her citation of authorities for this noble attitude, "but a man of birth and fortune will never come here to find you, and if you spend the three years of your minority with your mother, you will find it still more difficult to marry well. Marry as you best can. What is it to me if you wed an innkeeper? If he is a good man, I for my part won't turn my back on him. But I see your mother hovering uneasily about. No doubt she would like to show me the door." And picking up his hat, the last representative of Mme. Dupin's kin departed, leaving a doleful, but stubborn little maiden behind with the company of her choice.

Aurore's democratic ideals were put to a severe test by the idiosyncrasies of her mother. In order to be happy and gay, that volatile lady required constant excitement and variety. She had an insatiable appetite for new sensations in order to keep her liver working well, and her disposition pleasant; a change of habitation, quarrels and reconciliations, dinner in one restaurant to-day, in another to-morrow, a variety of toilettes. A lovely new hat was hideous the second time she wore it, and had to be retrimmed. A blond wig worn one day, was discarded for a chestnut one the next day, and by the end

of the week she had decided in favour of her own pretty black hair She read cheap novels in bed half the night and the next morning at six would be at work concocting new costumes new quarrels, and new plans When angry, there was little left in reserve in the vocabulary of vituperation

One night, after an orgy of temper and abuse, she had a fit of remorse and became confidential She called Aurore to her bedside, and amid tears laughter and pouts initiated her into the secrets of all her misfortunes It was a strange story for a daughter to hear from her mother's lips Sophie's version gained in piquancy and offered a different point of view from the story as narrated by Mme Dupin on a certain memorable night

After all ' she said when she had ended, wiping her eyes and sitting up among her pillows in a becoming cap with pink ribbons, ' I do not feel that I am to blame for anything I can't see that I have done wrong consciously I was led, often driven, to see and to act in certain ways My only sin was to have loved If I hadn't fallen in love with your father I would have been rich free, careless and without self reproach , for the rich lover I left for his sake would never have tried to make a lady of me as your father did I never had reflected any more than a sparrow I didn't know A from Z I said my prayers night and morning and God never made me feel that He did not accept them But the moment I took your father I was tormented by troubles and doubts I was told I was unworthy to love him To be sure your father told me to pay no attention to what they said and as long as he was happy I was But I was made to reflect, to question myself till I got to the point that I was ashamed and hated myself or rather I detested the people who made me that way and began to hate your fine society with its pretensions to morals and manners I had seen enough of its falseness and maliciousness to be able to laugh at it I detest and curse mankind—at least I do when I think of it ' she added naively

This conversation made a deep impression on Aurore She vowed that her mother's past would be for ever sacred in her eyes and they embraced tenderly Sophie fell asleep almost immediately, but Aurore meditated for a long time on that

wonderful phrase : " My only sin was to have loved ! " Love in the code of Jean Jacques was a virtue.

Three happy days of perfect harmony succeeded ; but it was spring, and Sophie's liver always was troublesome in the spring, and her disposition correspondingly peevish. Moreover, she was making no progress in finding a satisfactory husband for her daughter, and Aurore's presence had begun to be a burden. She threatened to put her in a convent again, but suddenly changed her mind, and announced one day that they were going to visit some old acquaintances of Maurice Dupin's whom she had met the preceding evening at dinner. Aurore received the news with her usual apathy.

M and Mme. Duplessis lived in a pleasant modern mansion at Melun, near Fontainebleau, with broad pretty lawns and a general aspect of cheerful prosperity. They were unacquainted with Leibnitz or Goethe, but they were generous, kind-hearted people, and liked to see their friends, of whom they had a great many, enjoy themselves. They were genuinely sorry for the pale, peaked young girl whom Sophie presented to them, and thought that a game of romps with their four little girls would be good for her. Aurore, who liked children, was quite ready to join in blind man's buff with gusto, and felt at home immediately. Sophie found the society of the Duplessis and their friends less amusing than her daughter did, and the day after their arrival she declared that she was obliged to return to Paris, but that she would leave Aurore with these kind friends for a few days. She left her there several months.

During that time the amiable M. Duplessis found a husband for her.



## CHAPTER II

### MARIANNA IN THE MOATED GRANGE

*"La Nature humaine est fragile et pleine de misérables passions  
Une seule est grande et belle c'est l'amour Mais c'est une flamme  
divine qu'il faut garder comme on gardait jadis le feu sacré dans des  
cassoleites fermées sur un autel d'or c'est un parfum qu'il faut  
envelopper et sceller de peur qu'il ne s'évapore"*<sup>1</sup>

*Le Secrétaire Intime*

THE château de Nohant was a large, plain, comfortable mansion constructed in 1767 on the remains of a fourteenth-century feudal chateau, portions of whose walls and round towers still existed. It stood close to the high road that ran from Châteauroux to La Châtre from which it was screened by tall chestnut trees and thick shrubbery. A dozen humble peasant cottages clustered about the green before its gates, and a low ancient church with steep brown roofs and a deep dark porch made up the village of Nohant. At a short distance from the house the river Indre which gave its name to the department curved and wound through the broad and melancholy fields of the Bas Berry. A utilitarian land, with vast fields of grain and long rows of pollarded trees destitute of romantic beauty, but not without a certain picturesqueness, a church tower rising here and there from a blur of low cottages ruined walls and towers of old castles crumbling under their shroud of ivy.

The social life of the Berrichon was grave and placid, like the country. The gentry were isolated on their scattered estates a large part of the year by impassable roads, swollen streams and extremes of weather. In the pleasant season they remained at home from habit, absorbed in agriculture and the

<sup>1</sup> Human nature is frail and full of miserable passions. One only is great and beautiful and that is Love. But it is a divine flame which must be guarded as they used to guard the sacred fire in incense jars on a golden altar it is a perfume which must be wrapped up and sealed lest it pass off in a vapour —*The Private Secretary*

pleasures of domesticity. The interests of the residents of La Châtre, three miles away, as in most provincial small towns, were centered in the dull happenings of their little circle, and the solitary household at Nohant had touched them only faintly, with a few ripples of mild sensation. After the scandal of her son's marriage and the tragedy of his death, Mme Dupin had shut herself up with her books and her harp and her old memories for company, and life at the château had moved on in a sedate, patriarchal manner. A horde of old peasant retainers married and propagated and got their living there, while lands and buildings deteriorated and debts accumulated under the stewardship of the philosophising Deschartres.

This was the heritage to which Aurore Dupin had succeeded on the death of her grandmother, and with which she endowed her husband, when, not long after her eighteenth birthday, she married Casimir Dudevant, an unromantic young man to whom she had been presented by the Roctier-Duplessis when eating ices at Tortoni's. For her kind new friends, the Duplessis of Melun, had come to the rescue of the impatient Sophie. Aurore had been hard to please, but they were tactful, resourceful people, and they manoeuvred so dexterously that she believed she had chosen for herself and according to her own heart, and that she was making a marriage of love and not of *convenance*. She was the less critical, because she was impatient to have the marriage question settled once for all, and escape from her mother's tyranny and temper. And she wanted a protector, someone to lean upon and love. It was pleasant, too, to be able to prove to the Villeneuves that she was not damaged goods, and was not obliged to marry an innkeeper.

Casimir Dudevant was well-looking, well-connected, and nine years her senior. He was occupying the interval between a terminated military service and an anticipated matrimonial opening by studying law pleasantly and obscurely in Paris. Like many of Aurore's kin, and like Aurore herself had not a civil ceremony preceded her advent by the narrow margin of a month, he was an illegitimate child, so that he might be trusted not to shy at the shadow of Sophie Delaborde. His father, a well-to-do old Gascon country gentleman, with a dash of Scotch blood, and the tastes of a sporting squire, was a retired colonel

and a baron of the Empire Having no children by his lawful wife, Baron Dudevant had adopted this natural son as his heir

Casimir although not of a demonstrative temperament, was well pleased with his bride and the *dot* she brought him Her sturdy little figure and independent manners promised well for the wife of a gentleman farmer His rather obtuse perceptions discovered no danger signals behind her large, somnolent, velvety eyes Aurore, on her part, had been touched by his good nature in joining in the rather puerile and boisterous amusements of the young people at the home of the Duplessis which she frankly enjoyed, and was encouraged thereby to believe that he might be led to share her more elevated tastes with equal complacency In the matter of literature and philosophy, Casimir's advantages had been limited, but she pictured herself tenderly assisting his willing mind along the thorny path plucking for him fair roses from the works of Rousseau and Montaigne, and even, perhaps, bringing him to the heights upon which Corambe still pursued his mystic way In the long quiet evenings at Nohant she would play for him on Mme Dupin's clavecin quaint little airs from the old Italian composers which had been handed down from her operatic great grandmother 'Oh, un believable joy !' she wrote her best friend at the convent

But *tete à tête* with the husband of your choice is seldom fraught with those pure joys of perfect companionship of which young brides dream In the early stages of matrimony Casimir like many another well intentioned husband made laudable efforts to follow or at all events to humour, his leader, but he was frequently caught snoring in the comfortable easy chair while the soporiferous book had slipped to the floor For the clavecin he displayed an undisguised aversion Aurore soon abandoned her efforts at education and devoted herself to embroidering tiny caps and bibs, and making little flannel wrappers

I have read somewhere,' she wrote to her schoolmate "that for perfect love people should have similar souls and opposite tastes and habits I am tempted to believe it How ever I could not love my husband more, if he were a poet or a musician

Casimir was now free to devote his time exclusively to hunting. Unfortunately the country around Berry offered less exhilarating sport than the great forests on his father's Gascon estate. Decidedly, Nohant was not gay. For society he had to be content with a rollicking, tippling barrister from La Châtre, named Alexis Duteil, and Aurore's natural brother Hippolyte. This genial youth had felt justified by a legacy from Mme. Dupin in abandoning the military career in which the influence of the powerful Villeneuves had at first promised him success, and had accepted Aurore's invitation to make his home at Nohant. She liked "Polyte" immensely, and so did Casimir. He laughed, sang, smoked and drank all day, and his unfailing good nature kept her lord amused, and was a buffer against an inconvenient tendency to grouchiness on his part. Duteil, too, was amazingly good company when he was not drunk. His face was badly pock-marked, but his *esprit* redeemed any external blemishes, and kept the dullest company in peals of laughter, while the gaiety of his songs put melancholy to flight. Although he was married he was unfortunately not proof against the *beaux yeux* of Mme. Dudevant, but she succeeded in keeping their relations perfectly discreet, and rewarded him with the pet name of Boutarin, in homage to his merry quips. The humour in the late Mme. Dupin's *salle-à-manger* after a day of hunting and several rounds of drinks was broader than that admirable lady would have enjoyed, and Aurore was often glad to take refuge in her dear grandmother's boudoir to escape it. Casimir's jokes lacked even the saving grace of wit. "My dear Casimir, how dull you are!" Aurore murmured, one night at dinner. "Nevertheless I love you just the same." But she was driven to revise once more her views on married *tête-à-tête*. "It is impossible to find two identical natures," she concluded. There must be in every union one who sacrifices to the other. But what an inexhaustible source of happiness to yield to one whom one loves! What a sacrifice to God and to conjugal love at the same time! Thus did this young Romanticist struggle to adjust her ideals to the sordid realities of life.

When Deschartres' term of stewardship ended, Casimir found additional distraction in the management of the property.

He worked strenuously and with a good will by the side of the peasants in the fields 'sweating blood and water' in his zeal. He made improvements, cutting down dying trees for fire-wood and clearing away the shrubbery where Aurore had once built a secret altar to Corambé. He got rid of the bedraggled peacocks, and the superannuated horses and mangey old dogs. He was proud of his work, for the place looked much tidier. Mme Dudevant was dumb before these assaults on the dear associations of her childhood. She sacrificed to conjugal love and God her impulse to protest with tears, and Casimir continued to be on paper, *mon ange et mon cher amour*, but she began to be conscious of gaps in her soul that even her little son Maurice whose arrival she had hailed as the most beautiful moment of her life could not fill.

It is not to be supposed that the temperamental peculiarities of a Romantic Mystic in whose veins the blood of princes mingled with that of the proletariat were easily fathomed by a plain, prosaic gentleman farmer. One of her admirers, puzzled by her mysterious contradictions, once told her that he could not make her out. When she seemed to be listening attentively to an abstruse conversation she feigned not to have heard it, if questioned as to her opinion of it. She would throw away her book and jump rope if caught in the perusal of serious literature. She sang charmingly, if she thought no one was listening but was nervous and wooden when asked to sing for others, and if it was noticed that she shed tears at a play protested that her emotion was due to the absurdity of the hero's wig. What was he to think of her? That she was a sensible and superior young woman or a giddy headed romp?

To which she responded "I am all that you are pleased to think me!"

It will easily be seen that poor Casimir was bewildered by the erratic and contradictory moods of his lady and as he was always irritable when he did not understand things under a not uncommon delusion that he was being made fun of, his disposition did not mellow with time. Ill temper began to inscribe little tell tale lines on his rather flat, flabby countenance that had been so smooth and promising in the days when

they had ices at Tortoni's, and certain ugly curves appeared at the corners of his lips and nostrils, suspiciously like a sneer. His ill-humour was publicly manifested one day while visiting the dear Duplessis friends at the home where he had once so much enjoyed playing games with the young people in the days of his courtship. Aurore's boisterous spirits and excited outbursts when romping with the five little Duplessis girls and their friends and her fondness for practical jokes now seemed to him unbecoming in a wife and a mother. He expressed his sentiments firmly and strongly, but unavailingly. It was perhaps not unreasonable that he should disapprove of her throwing gravel at the head of their host while taking coffee on the terrace, particularly as some of it fell in his own cup, but to seize her by the collar and box her ears was certainly unworthy of a husband and a father. Aurore began to suspect that there were limits beyond which sacrifice to God and conjugal love was not justified.

She returned to Nohant with a passive exterior, but an internal ferment and rebellion which soon affected her liver and produced those feminine symptoms of "vapors," faintness and low spirits, always so mystifying to mere man. One morning at the breakfast table she astonished Casimir by bursting into tears. Being neither a philosopher nor a poet, he was at a loss to account for it, but in his clumsy way he tried to cheer her up. The treasury was low just then, but he heroically dipped into their principal, and bought her a piano. Aurore was touched, but having no one who enjoyed listening to her music, she left her new piano closed.

At this juncture Fate stepped in and brought her old schoolmates, the Bazouins, Jane and Aimée, to visit Nohant. They were serene, well-bred young ladies, whose devotion to an indulgent and gouty father had thus far interfered with their being matrimonially settled. Noticing that the one-time Queen of the Convent was not in her usual good form, they persuaded Casimir to bring her to Cauterets, in the Pyrenees, where they were going with their father for the cure.

So, on Aurore's twenty-first birthday the Dudevants set forth for Bordeaux, taking with them little Maurice, now a year old, and his nurse, a groom, and their horses. Dudevant

was in his habitual bad temper, and Aurore was struggling with her tears while she tried to look at the scenery

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The big ugly hotel at Cauterets was filled with uninteresting and fashionable people, who passed their days in exchanging news of their livers and joints. Casimir found eagles and chamois to hunt and was out from daylight till dark, returning late at night to eat an enormous supper and fall asleep at once. Meanwhile Aurore moped and meditated on the disillusionments of the marriage state. "In perfect love," she wrote in her journal, "the husband would not invent continual excuses for absence. If forced to be away, his return would be full of tenderness." Actual experience did not attain this standard and the inevitable conclusion was "Marriage is fine for lovers, and useful for saints." She resolved to be a saint.

This noble resolve was soon put to the test. Among the visitors at Cauterets Aurore had discovered one congenial spirit, a young woman from Bordeaux named Zoé Leroy. This new friend was the perfect type of the *confidante* so necessary to a young wife who had arrived at the *impasse* where Mme. Dudevant now found herself, abounding in sympathy, revelling in intrigue, and withal gay and unconventional. Too gay, in fact for the tastes of the Bazouins Jane and Aimée, and they drew icily aloof. In the company of the lively Zoé was her fiancé, and also another friend, a rising young barrister of twenty six, who bore the name of his distinguished grandfather, Aurélien de Sèze, the defender of Louis XVI. M. de Sèze was at Cauterets on a tender and delicate errand in the interests of his proposed marriage to a beautiful young lady who was stopping there with her parents. While Jane and Aimée Bazouin demurely accompanied their father every day to the Springs in dainty and faultless costumes, or lay perspiring in layers of blankets after the baths, Aurore cantered off with her more venturesome companions on long excursions in the Pyrenees. On horseback one is born again; she discovered and drinks life anew. She was amazed at the exhilaration of her spirits at her own daring. No path was too steep, no precipice too giddy to daunt her when she was in the society of these new friends. She returned to the hotel,